

Mental Health Bill Bulletin 3

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National Assembly Slams the Mental Health Bill

Members of Welsh mental health charity Hafal and other Welsh organisations travelled to Parliament on Tuesday to protest against the Mental Health Amending Bill which had its second reading (below).



Deputy Chief Executive Alun Thomas (centre) said: "The UK Government has really missed an opportunity to work with patients and balance compulsion laws with rights to early treatment. We will continue to fight for a fairer Bill that takes into account the needs of patients."

"We spoke to several Welsh MPs at Parliament including Nick Ainger, Madeline Moon, Huw Irranca-Davies and Hywel Francis. They were very interested in what Hafal had to say, and we have promised to keep in touch with them on the progress of the Bill."

Jo Roberts (fourth from right), a Hafal Member with experience of mental illness, said: "I found it very positive meeting my MP Madeline Moon and other MPs at Parliament. Madeline is a social worker by background and obviously had good awareness of the issues surrounding the Bill. I'm sure her continued involvement will help us get our views heard."

The Bill came in for criticism during the reading: Lord Melvin Bragg said the Bill needed "serious amendments"; Baroness Meacher stated: "We are in danger of creating a mental health system dictated by our tabloid press. This Bill needs to be amended." Baroness Barker added that the Bill was "unfit for purpose".

Meanwhile, in the Assembly Debate on the Queen's Speech held on Tuesday, a motion proposed by Kirsty Williams AM (Brecon and Radnorshire) was agreed – that the National Assembly:

"Regrets the focus on compulsion and containment in the Mental Health Bill, which could lead to people with mental health problems being detained for

reasons other than treatment; and believes that any new laws must be focused on patient autonomy and access to care, with compulsory treatment used only as a last resort."

Helen Mary Jones AM, Shadow Minister for Health and Social Services, quoted Hafal at the

Assembly on Tuesday when discussing the Mental Health Bill with the Assembly Government and the Secretary of State for Wales, raising concerns about the lack of reciprocal rights in the Bill and proposing separate legislation for Wales.



Responding to Jenny Randerson AM's question about why Wales can't have its own Mental Health Bill (as Scotland does), the First Minister stated that "these will be matters for manifestos" and that improving mental health services "is a key priority".

What happens next with the Bill?

Following the second reading the Bill will go through the following stages (with approximate times):

- **Committee stage:** December/January
- **Report Stage/third reading:** January/February
- **Bill published in Lords:** February/March
- **2nd reading, Commons:** February/March
- **Committee stage, Commons:** March
- **Report Stage/third reading, Commons:** March/April
- **Reconciliation of texts between houses:** April/May
- **Royal Assent**

...unless of course it fails to proceed at some stage.

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